

PRESENTATION FROM THE MICHIGAN DEER AND ELK MARKETING  
PROGRAM

TO CWD TASK FORCE:

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I CURRENTLY SERVE AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MICHIGAN DEER AND ELK MARKETING PROGRAM, VICE PRESIDENT OF MICHIGAN DEER AND ELK FARMERS ASSOCIATION. MY FAMILY OWNS AND OPERATES ANTLER BAY TROPHY WHITETAIL RANCH, A 1700 ACRE FACILITY IN THE UPPER PENINSULA.

THE STATE OF MICHIGAN HAS BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT WITH MANY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNING ANIMAL HEALTH ISSUES; MDNR, MDA, MICHIGAN RESOURCE STEWARDS, MUCC, SCI, QDMA, MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU AND THE PRIVATELY OWNED CERVIDAE PRODUCTION INDUSTRY AS WELL AS THOSE CONCERNED AND INVOLVED LEGISLATORS.

AS WITH THE INCEPTION OF MOST NEWLY DISCOVERED DISEASES, THE RISKS OF CWD FOR HUMAN HEALTH, ANIMAL HEALTH AND TRADE HAVE NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED CONCLUSIVELY. SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MEASURES AT ALL LEVELS FOR APPROPRIATE RISK ASSESSMENT, RISK MANAGEMENT, RISK MITIGATION, AND FOR COMPREHENSIVE RISK COMMUNICATION.

THE PUBLIC NEEDS EXPERT ADVICE WHICH IS EXPECTED FOR ACTION IN THE AREAS OF RISK MENTIONED, AND SHOULD RELATE TO SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY, AND TO POLICY.

THE USDA IS DETERMINED TO HELP GENERATE SUCH ADVICE AND SUPPORT OF THE CONFIGURATION OF A SAFE, CLEAN AND EQUITABLE ANIMAL AGRICULTURE WHICH SATISFIES THE HIGHEST ETHICAL STANDARDS. "TO DATE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED TO HUMANS UNDER NATURAL CONDITIONS." (U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL).

MANY SCIENTIFIC UNCERTAINTIES EXIST TODAY AND WITH IT THERE IS AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR SCIENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE SOUND AND RELIABLE POLICY MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH.

UNDERSTANDING CWD. CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE BELONGS TO A FAMILY OF DISEASES KNOWN AS TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (TSE) WHILE IT SHARES CERTAIN CHARACTERISTIC WITH OTHER TSES, CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE IS A DISTINCT CONDITION APPARENTLY ONLY AFFECTING MEMBERS OF THE CERVID OR DEER FAMILY. CREUTZFELDT- JACOB, A LARGELY SPORADIC TSE DISEASE AFFECTING ABOUT ONE IN A MILLION PEOPLE WORLD WIDE, AND VARIANT CREUTZFELD-JOCOB WHICH WAS LINKED TO MAD COW OUTBREAK IN ENGLAND, HAVE NOT BEEN SHOWN TO BE LINKED TO OR CAUSED BY CWD. ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SHOULD INCLUDE MEASURES TO CONTROL CWD IN DEER AND ELK. WE NEED CONTROL MEASURES OF WHICH MANY ARE IN PLACE ENSURING AT THE SAME TIME THAT UNJUSTIFIED MEASURES ARE NOT APPLIED THAT RESULT IN RESTRICTING TRADE OR DO AWAY WITH HUNTING DUE TO FEAR FROM MISINFORMATION USED TO SUPPORT INAPPROPRIATE AGENCY REGULATIONS.

NO RISK TO HUMANS DOCUMENTED. THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, THE U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL, THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, MANY UNIVERSITIES AND ABOUT A DOZEN STATE HEALTH AGENCIES HAVE STUDIED CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE. NONE HAVE FOUND A LINK BETWEEN IT AND ANY NEUROLOGICAL DISEASE AFFECTING HUMANS. "HUNTING CONTRIBUTES MORE THAN \$20 BILLION TO THE ECONOMY ANNUALLY. AS AN AVID HUNTER, FORMER PROFESSIONAL DEER BIOLOGIST, AND ADMINISTRATOR WITH THE STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES, I UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF HUNTERS TO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND STATE AND LOCAL ECONOMIES. ONLY THROUGH A COORDINATED AND COOPERATIVE APPROACH AMONG FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS, HUNTERS AND VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WILL WE BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE CONTROL AND ELIMINATION OF CWD IN OUR DEER AND ELK POPULATIONS." (STEVE WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR, U.S. WILDLIFE SERVICE).

THERE HAS BEEN AN OVERWHELMING NEED TO IMPLEMENT SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING OUT RISK ASSESSMENT, RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK COMMUNICATION CANNOT BE DIMINISHED. ASPECTS OF FOOD SAFETY AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE ARE RECEIVING TREMENDOUS ATTENTION AND THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF CERVIDAE PRODUCTION IS BEING REVIEWED.

WE NEED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, RISK ANALYSIS FOR ANIMALS AND HUMANS, AS WELL AS MANAGEMENT OF THE RISK LINKED TO CWD. NEVER BEFORE HAS A HEALTH EVENT OF ANIMAL ORIGIN GIVEN RISE TO SO MANY DEBATES, CONTROVERSIES AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL UPHEAVAL WITHIN THE AGRICULTURE, HUNTING AND CONSERVATION COMMUNITIES. HOWEVER, WE MUST KEEP IN MIND THE IMPACT OF CWD ON HERDS IS INSIGNIFICANT IN RELATIONSHIP TO EPIZOOTICS. BSE IN EUROPEAN CATTLE HERDS HAD LESS THAN 200,000

HEAD AFFECTED OVER FIFTEEN YEARS OUT OF A GLOBAL POPULATION OF NEARLY ONE AND A HALF BILLION. ALSO, THE IMPACT IS FAR FROM THE LEVEL OF RAVAGES CAUSED BY MAJOR ZOOONOSIS, SUCH AS RABIES, ECHINOCISIS, TUBERCULOSIS, OR BRUCELLOSIS.

FURTHERMORE, THE CURRENT OBSERVATIONS OF WILD DEER AND ELK POPULATIONS ARE ON THE INCREASE, IN FACT THEY ARE GAINING TO LEVELS NEVER SEEN BEFORE. THE ELK HERD IN THE ENDEMIC AREA IN COLORADO IS GROWING. DEER POPULATIONS ARE THE HIGHEST THEY HAVE EVER BEEN SINCE RECORDING DEER NUMBERS STARTED IN 1620, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HUNTER NUMBERS ARE INCREASING AND DEER/AUTOMOBILE COLLISIONS ACCOUNT FOR A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF DEER DEATHS.

MICHIGAN AUTOMOBILE DEER DEATHS ALONE REPRESENT AS MUCH AS 10% OF THE HUNTER KILL. "WITHOUT HUNTERS, EVEN THE MOST ZEALOUS GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO STUDY AND TO STOP CWD WOULD FALL SHORT.

THERE'S EVERY REASON TO HUNT DEER AND ELK. EXTENSIVE RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE AND TO DATE NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE SHOWING THIS PRION DISEASE CAN JUMP FROM WILDLIFE TO HUMANS. I LIVE AND HUNT WITHIN THE CWD ENDEMIC AREA AND I DO NOT PLAN TO STOP." (DR. TOM THORNE, WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT).

THE FIGHT AGAINST CWD IS AND HAS BEEN CONSIDERED A PRIORITY, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE THIS PHENOMENON BECOMES THE SEEDS FOR POSSIBLE SPREAD THROUGH OUR WILDLIFE HERDS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTION. NOT ONLY DOES IT HAVE A RELATIONSHIP TO BSE, THUS A POSSIBILITY (AND APPEARANCE) THREAT TO HUMAN HEALTH, BUT ALSO IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNDERMINING OF THE CONFIDENCE OF CITIZENS

TOWARDS FOOD SAFETY, HUNTING, SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY, AND THE GOVERNMENT. WE MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO RESTORE THIS CONFIDENCE BY PROVIDING ASSURANCES THAT ALL ANIMAL HEALTH STANDARDS ARE BASED ON SOUND SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS." THERE ARE PERCEPTIONS THAT CWD MAY SOMEHOW THREATEN HUMAN OR TRADITIONAL DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK HEALTH. DATA AND EXPERIENCES TO DATE SUGGEST THOSE THREATS APPEAR VANISHINGLY SMALL." (DR. MIKE MILLER, COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE). "ENJOY YOUR HUNT. IF YOU SEE A SKINNY ANIMAL CONTACT AUTHORITIES. OTHERWISE, ENJOY YOUR HUNT AND ENJOY VENISON A LOT. I'M NOT ABOUT TO STOP HUNTING DEER OR EATING VENISON." (DR. ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, WYOMING VETERINARY LABORATORY).

WE UNDERSTAND THE DELAY CREATED BY THE LONG (UNKNOWN) INCUBATION OF THE DISEASE AND THE DELAY IN ACQUISITION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE CREATES A VOID. FACED WITH THIS VOID, WILDLIFE AND AGRICULTURAL MANAGERS, AGENCY PERSONNEL, AND LEGISLATORS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PURPOSE TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE DECISIONS RELATING TO RISK MANAGEMENT. THIS GROUP IN TIME IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LOSS OF CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF CITIZENS, CONFUSED BY THE OVERWHELMING LACK OF KNOWLEDGE COMMUNICATED ABOUT CWD.

WE NEED TO CLARIFY THE RISKS LINKED TO CWD AND THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF MANAGING BOTH THE ORIGINS AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF CWD, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE BECAUSE POLICIES RELATING TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND ANIMAL HEALTH ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RESULTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC COSTS AND BENEFITS EXPECTED. THE MDNR, MDA AND THE PRIVATELY OWNED CERVIDAE PRODUCTION INDUSTRY MUST HARMONIZE COMMUNICATION ON THE RISKS LINKED TO

CWD. WE MUST CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO COMBAT THIS DISEASE EFFECTIVELY AND TO PREVENT ITS OCCURRENCE IN PLACES IT DOES NOT EXIST. WE SUPPORT PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO COMBAT CWD TO INCLUDE ITS SPREAD THROUGH EXPORTS OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS AND ESPECIALLY TO DEFINE SURVEILLANCE METHODS NECESSARY TO DETECT THE DISEASE WHERE IT OCCURS.

AN APPROPRIATE RISK ASSESSMENT WILL PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH LEGISLATION AND TRANSFORMATION LEVELS AND IN WILDLIFE. WE NEED A REFERENCE FOR THE APPLICATION OF PRODUCT MEASURES RELATING TO PRIVATELY OWNED CERVIDAE AND THE COMMODITIES THEY PRODUCE AS WELL AS PREVENTION AND ERADICATION OF CWD IN WILDLIFE.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE MICHIGAN DEER AND ELK MARKETING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MDEMP) RECOGNIZE THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IS SHORT STAFFED, ILL-EQUIPPED, AND UNDERFUNDED TO CONDUCT A PROPER SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING PROGRAM FOR CWD, LET ALONE CONDUCTING AN APPROPRIATE RISK ASSESSMENT. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE INDUSTRY AND PRODUCERS TO BE INVOLVED AND TAKE THE LEAD TO DRIVE MANAGEMENT PLANS TO THE PRODUCER LEVEL. THE MDEMP OFFERS CONTINUING ASSISTANCE IN LEADING A TASK FORCE TO MOUNT A COORDINATING RESPONSE TO CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE. ALL WOULD AGREE THAT TO PROTECT ANIMALS AND THE MICHIGAN DEER AND ELK PRODUCTION INDUSTRY, THERE MUST BE A CONTINUED INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT APPROACH INVOLVING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES, INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS AND PRODUCERS.

MDEMP SUPPORTS BUILDING FROM OUR CURRENT STATUS TO MOUNT A COORDINATING RESPONSE TO CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE USING AN

APPROACH MODELED AFTER WILLIAM D. HUESTON, DVM, PHD, AND UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA. WE URGE THE MICHIGAN CWD TASK FORCE TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDING THE CREATION OF A CWD TASK FORCE TO RESPOND TO CWD PRIOR TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE DISEASE IN A STATE OR REGION, ADDITIONALLY TO IMPROVE THE COORDINATION AND PREPAREDNESS FOR RESPONSE. MDEFA OFFERS THEIR ASSISTANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE FORMATION OF A TASK FORCE COMPRISED OF FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES (ANIMAL HEALTH, AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND PUBLIC HEALTH), SPORTSMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS, PRIVATELY OWNED CERVIDAE PRODUCERS, STATE MEAT PROCESSORS ASSOCIATIONS, SPORTS EQUIPMENT RETAILERS, THE POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY, AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. MSU FACULTY OR WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS COULD SERVE AS FACILITATORS FOR THE GROUP. INITIAL AGENDA TOPICS SHOULD BE PREPAREDNESS AND UNIFORM COMMUNICATION ON THE ISSUES OF CWD AND THOSE ISSUES SURROUNDING CWD. THE TASK FORCE DISCUSSIONS CAN WORK OUT A RESPONSE PLAN FOR THE STATE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO DATE, SO THAT WHEN AND IF CWD IS IDENTIFIED IN MICHIGAN, ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS WILL BE IN AGREEMENT ON THE RESPONSE. FURTHERMORE, THE TASK FORCE SHOULD EMPHASIZE COORDINATED COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS, SETTING THE STAGE FOR JOINT NEWS CONFERENCES, PRESS RELEASES, AND INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS.

THIS RECOMMENDED TASK FORCE SHOULD IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING RESPONSE CAPABILITIES, SUCH AS USE OF VETERINARY STUDENTS TO SUPPLEMENT THE SURVEILLANCE TEAM, A COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO SCALE UP THE DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY TO MEET HUNTER DEMAND FOR TESTING AND STRATEGIES FOR AUGMENTING HUMAN TSE SURVEILLANCE.

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION OF THE TASK FORCE WILL BE INCREASED COMMUNICATION AND TRUST ESTABLISHED AMONG THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS LEADING NOT ONLY TO A BETTER RESPONSE BUT TO A MORE CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE RISK COMMUNICATION.

SINCERELY,

KEN KEELEY